Visiting Hindi Professors are regularly deputed to the 12 Hindi Chairs maintained by ICCR in various foreign universities/institutions. Indian Missions/Posts encouraged foreign nationals to learn Hindi, for which local Hindi learning classes are organized with local residents as Hindi teachers. Local organizations engaged in promotion and teaching of Hindi abroad are supported financially by Missions/Posts abroad as well as through donation of textbooks, dictionaries, audio-visual cassettes, computer software, CD-ROMs, Hindi magazines and children's literature. Special Hindi learning kits have also been provided to Missions/Posts, which are in great demand. Literary events essay competitions and Kavi Sammelans are organized by Missions/Posts, apart from celebration of Hindi divas.

To encourage use of Hindi abroad, on national days, the President's address to the Nation is read out in Hindi by most Missions/Posts abroad. From time to time, Hindi Conferences are organized abroad to propagate Hindi abroad. A regional Hindi Conference was organized in Romania in July, 2004. Panels of Hindi interpreters have also been set up in 30 countries.

The activities of ICCR for promotion and propagation of Indian culture and Hindi abroad are closely synchronized with the overall activities of Indian Missions/Posts abroad, which are instrumental in the implementation of ICCR's policies and programmes abroad. Accordingly, to ensure and strengthen the activities of the ICCR, it functions as an autonomous body under the Ministry of External Affairs. However, mechanisms for coordination with the Ministry of Culture already exist. Secretary (Culture) is a member of the General Assembly of the ICCR and is also a member of the Planning Committee and Governing Body of ICCR.

Routes for cross-border visit

2473. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open more routes to enable people from India and Pakistan to visit their relatives in each others country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) how it is ensured that people return to their respective countries after the allowed time limit;

(d) whether there has been violation of visa restrictions after the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route was opened; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the action being taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) In keeping with Government's policy of increasing people to people contact between the countries, Government have agreed with Pakistan to start bus services from Amritsar to Lahore and to Nankana Sahib, and from Poonch to Rawalakot. Agreement has also been reached to reestablish the Munabao-Khokrapar rail route by 1 January, 2006. Work is currently under progress on both sides.

An expert level meeting with Pakistan to discuss the signing of the agreements on the Amritsar-Lahore and Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus services is scheduled on December, 20-21 2005. Discussions on the Poonch-Rawalakot bus service will be taken up again with Pakistan, once the infrastructure destroyed in the region by the 8 October earthquake is restored.

(c) Travel of all foreigners is governed by immigration laws that ensure that other country nationals who overstay beyond the allowed period are deported and blacklisted.

(d) and (e) Travel on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route is on the basis of entry permit which normally allows a stay of one month. There have been some instances of overstay by Pakistani nationals who have travelled on this bus. These nationals have been subsequently deported by the concerned authorities. However, 6 Pakistani nationals are still stranded in India after the October 8 earthquake.

Extradition treaties

†2474. SHRI P. K. MAHESHWARI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the countries which have signed extradition treaty with India;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.